

June 2006

EDUCATION MATTERS

Volume 2, Issue I

MISSION

The District of Columbia State Education Office promotes learning for District residents of all ages by providing access to resources, services and information for a higher quality of life.

VISION

The District of Columbia State Education Office is the agency that is leading the District of Columbia's transformation into a City of Learning.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- A Message from the State Education Officer
- SEO's Person of the Month
- Educational Inspiration
- Did You Know
- What's New
- Calendar of Events
- Education Experience

MAYOR ANTHONY WILLIAMS AND THE DC BUSINESS COMMUNITY JOIN FORCES FOR LITERACY

On Wednesday, May 3rd, Mayor Anthony Williams and top executives from the Washington, DC business community joined forces to explore ways to expand assistance and resources for adults who lack literacy skills. The Mayor addressed the business community about the accomplishments of the Lifelong Learning Initiative and he announced the formation of the Adult Literacy Council.

One third of all District residents operate at the lowest levels of poverty. Low literacy rates will have a negative impact on DC's economic landscape. More than 7,000 adults have received literacy services in the District. Mayor Williams addressed the need for further assistance and resources from the DC business community.

"Every adult in our city should have the opportunity to enjoy reading and learning," Mayor Williams said during the breakfast sponsored by the Fannie Mae Foundation. "This is a very important effort, and I strongly support it in any way I can, in office or out of office," he said.

The Adult Literacy Council task force will include many of the attendees present at the literacy event including Mayor Williams; Clifford B. Janey, DC Public Schools Superintendent; William L. Pollard, President of the University of the District of Columbia; Deborah A. Gist, DC State Education Officer; Michael Harreld, Regional President of PNC Bank; Richard LaPointe, Deputy Assistant Secretary, US Department of Education; Stacey D. Stewart, President & CEO, Fannie Mae Foundation; and Gustavo Velasquez, Director, Mayor's Office of Latino Affairs.

Deborah A. Gist, who served as host for the event, said, "We are bringing together elected officials with an influential group of leaders from the business, philanthropic, public and education sectors to develop a plan to tackle our literacy deficiencies."



Deborah A. Gist
State Education Officer



Mayor Anthony A. Williams greets Stacey Stewart, President of The Fannie Mae Foundation at the literacy event.



STATE EDUCATION OFFICE

STATE EDUCATION OFFICER

Ms. Deborah A. Gist

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A Message from the State Education Officer



Welcome to the second volume of Education Matters. I plan to use this forum to highlight one of our programs each quarter. The District of Columbia's Gaining Early Awareness

and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (DC GEAR UP) is unique from other initiatives. This program, free to all participants, encourages partnerships committed to serving and accelerating the academic achievement of a cohort of students through their high school graduation. DC GEAR UP works directly with DC Public Schools and Public Charter Schools, their students, student's families, teachers and principals, providing the support and services needed. DC GEAR UP partnerships supplement existing reform efforts. The program offers services that promote academic preparation and the understanding of necessary costs to attend college. DC GEAR UP has five components: academic preparation, parental involvement, college financial assistance (students and parents), student and family support services, and early college awareness information and education.

Each DC GEAR UP school coordinator is partnered with a local college/university, which include: Georgetown University, Howard University, Southeastern University, Trinity College, and the University of the District of Columbia. The college and university partners provide a range of activities and programs for our students and their families such as sponsoring campus visits where they can learn about the requirements of college admissions, the admissions process, financial assistance and college costs, and sponsor summer institutes for DC GEAR UP students. Through summer institutes developed and implemented through the university partners, GEAR UP students have been academically and culturally enriched through courses, lectures, and field trips and demonstrations.

When asked what DC GEAR UP has meant to them, our students had the following responses:

"I was failing or about to fail a lot of my classes. They motivated me to get back on my feet and focus on my priority."

- D'Angelo Johnson

"DC GEAR UP is a program that prepares you for college and helps you prepare for high school. It's a good program with helpful mentors like Ms. Spellman and Ms. Heller. Without these two people, I don't know how I would be helped at school while trying to work hard to get into a good high school."

- Jacqueline Hamilton

"DC GEAR UP has done so many things for me. This program has helped me with my attitude and how to get along with my teachers. It taught me how to have respect for myself and for people around me. Because of DC GEAR-UP, I am an honor roll student. My grade point average is 3.5."

- Marcus Robinson

In April our students were fortunate enough to participate in the first DC GEAR UP Spring Break College Tour. Eligible students were separated into two groups and sent on a college trip to either central North Carolina or Georgia. The response has been overwhelmingly positive, and we have included an essay from one of the students who attended the Atlanta trip at the end of this newsletter to illustrate the excitement and inspiration all of the students have reported.

Recently, DC GEAR UP was awarded the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships' 2006 Promoting Excellence and Innovation in Education Grant. This \$50,000 grant will support one of our four University Partner Summer Institutes. The Georgetown Summer Institute was selected for its focus on science and technology. The Institute will combine the study of genetics with the study of the Spanish language and will culminate with a study abroad trip to Latin America.

Respectfully,



Bachir Kabbara, Database Manager

How long have you worked at the SEO and what is your role?

I have worked at SEO for more than 3 years as the Database Manager. My role extends beyond managing databases, it includes managing all IT systems used at SEO and its departments.

What additions and/or changes concerning your division have you been directly involved in?

I have been directly involved in several projects that support the different SEO units. However, there are two major projects in which I was involved. The first

one is document management system implementation for all SEO units in compliance with the paper free initiative at SEO. The second one, a multistage one, is web enabling the systems the different units use in order to improve on the way SEO serves DC residents. The second project is undergone in partnership with OCTO.

What has been your biggest challenge or underlying issue that you deal with at the SEO?

The SEO is young, making it very dynamic. Moreover, IT vision has to be at the level of serving the long-term mission and vision of the agency. However, with more focus all challenges will be overcome. My main concern is that the various SEO programs have the best systems in place and are able to analyze and evaluate technology solutions that serve the SEO's mission.

What past experiences do you bring to the SEO?

I have more than ten years of Information Technology experience which includes: database management, system development, and project management in both private and public environment.

What motivates you to be involved in education?

Everyday I see how positively we can impact the educational experience with our DC constituents. Moreover, the ability to use my experience in a way that makes technology more available and of more service to my customers is really a joy.

Educational Inspiration



she was in the 7th grade. Academically, Mikia currently holds a 4.0 GPA for the 3rd Advisory, was selected to receive SAT workshops at school as a result of high pre – DC CAS test scores, and she has been nominated to be a United States Achievement Academy National English Award Winner. Mikia is also very active in extracurricular activities. Every afternoon after school she participates in cheerleading practice. She also participates in many DC GEAR UP activities including weekly academic assistance and educational field trips. Of Mikia, her current DC GEAR UP Coordinator, Yuliana Del Arroyo, says “This

young lady exerts humbleness and sincerity in all her work and interactions.” DC GEAR UP is proud to honor Mikia Ross as the Education Matters Educational Inspiration.

Inspirational Facts

From April 1, 2005 – March 31, 2006 DC GEAR UP has:

- ✓ Provided services to 939 students
- ✓ Provided an average of 4.1 hours of tutoring to 853 students
- ✓ Provided an average of 1.4 hours of academic/ career/general counseling to all students

Mikia Ross is the definition of a well-rounded individual. She is a 10th grader at Dunbar Senior High School and has been in DC GEAR UP since it began when

Did You Know ?

DC Free Summer Meals program provides nutritious, good food to youth up to age 18 and certain adults with disabilities. The program reimburses organizations that provide meals to District children from low-income areas or to people with disabilities.

The DC Free Summer Meals Program will operate from June 19, 2006 – August 31, 2006. Most free meal locations will be at DC Parks and Recreation sites, DC Public Schools and community and faith based organizations.

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor for DC Free Summer Meals, receiving additional information, or an application please contact George Ferguson at (202) 724-7864 or the *211 Answers Please* phone line by simply dialing 211 (24 hour a day, 7 days a week). We encourage you to visit the DC Free Summer Meals website at www.seo.dc.gov for further information.

Educational Licensure Commission

is the licensure authority for post-secondary programs in the District of Columbia. These programs range from non-degree certificate programs, such as cosmetology and nursing assistant programs, to traditional colleges offering bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees. There are currently 27 schools offering degree programs and 43 schools offering non-degree programs licensed to operate in the District of Columbia. The Commission staff also processes complaints about the educational programs that it licenses and provides transcripts to students from closed schools. Check the Educational Licensure page on the SEO website www.seo.dc.gov for information on higher educational programs in the District.

DC OneApp's deadline for Higher Education Financial Services' (HEFS) three grant programs, DC Tuition Assistance Grant Program (DCTAG), DC Leveraging Education Assistance Partnership Program (DCLEAP) and DC Adoption Scholarship (DCAS), is **June 30th**. To service the high level of constituents expected during the last week of application season, the HEFS staff will be available on Saturday June 24th from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm to accept DC OneApp applications and supporting documentation. It is anticipated that over 10,000 applications will be processed for the 2006-2007 academic year.

Nutrition Services administers the Child and Adult Care Food Program which entitles child care centers, adult day care centers, after-school programs, family day care centers and shelters to feed youth up to eighteen years of age in their facilities. Recently Congress extended food program eligibility for children in shelters from 13 years of age to 18 years of age.

After-school programs, homeless, runaway and domestic violence shelters can receive reimbursement. For more information about the Child and Adult Care Food Program, please contact the SEO Special Nutrition and Commodities office and speak to Issac Shaw at (202) 727-6436.

SEO Ed Digest is a free online tool distributed monthly by the State Education Office. Our mission is to share national research on urban P-16 education with city leaders, administrators, researchers, the education policy community and other interested stakeholders. Visit the SEO Ed Digest at www.seo.dc.gov. You can subscribe to the SEO Ed Digest by registering with DCDOCS.



DC Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (DC GEAR UP) has unveiled enhanced website features to the public. DC GEAR UP students, parents, volunteers, and interested community members will all be served by the expanded information offered on the site. The new pages found at www.seo.dc.gov (Click on GEAR UP), offer information and updates on all of the exciting projects in which the DC GEAR UP students are involved.

Each DC GEAR UP Sector has its own page, to highlight the unique activities in which the students attending those schools are taking part.

Parents looking to learn more about the sector their child is in, or wanting to contact their child's coordinator have their own page as well!

What's New



Food and Nutrition Commission

The Mayor's Commission on Food and Nutrition was established on March 3, 2005. The commission has 19 fully appointed Commission members, not including our State Education Officer, Deborah A. Gist. Robert Egger of the DC Central Kitchen is the Chair, and Kim Perry of DC Hunger Solutions, Food Research Action Center (FRAC) is the Co-Chair. Meetings have been held from 6:00pm – 8:00 pm on: July 13, 2005, August 9, 2005,

September 14, 2005, October 17, 2005, January 19, 2006, March 16, 2006 and May 25, 2006. Retreat May 1, 2006.

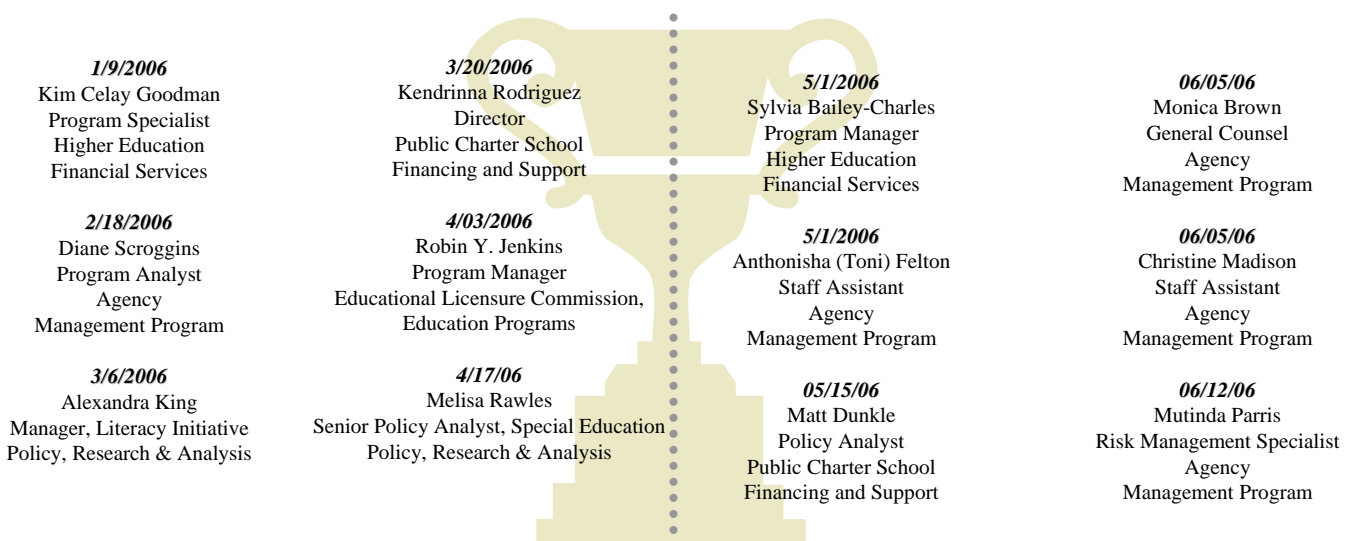
The Commission members represent DC Department on Aging, DC Department of Human Services, DC Parks and Recreation, DC Department of Health, Capital Area Food Bank, DC Central Kitchen, FRAC, Bread for the City, Community Foundations, nutritionists, local universities, DC Public and Public Charter Schools.

The following three Committees were established and individual Committee meetings began on October 2005: Children and Youth, Adults and Families and Aging Adults and Elderly. Each Committee has established a target age group which it focuses on. The community-based focus is aimed at improving access to food and nutrition, quality of school meals, improving and increasing community/government/nonprofit partnerships, and increasing awareness on the issues.

A Strategic Planning Retreat was held on May 1st, 2006. Over the next year, the Commissioners decided they would like to:

- (a) **Conduct a study** that will produce an analysis of the health care costs of poor nutrition on two populations in the District. The study would also make recommendations on ways to prevent these costs.
- (b) **Hold a press conference** to release the findings and recommendations of the study.
- (c) **Develop a timeline for budget recommendations for the Mayor** to place in the city's budget.
- (d) **Conduct visits with Council members** educating them on the budget recommendations.

New Team Members



What's Happening

June 2006

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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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August 2006

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November 2006

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Calendar of Events

Date/Time

Event

Higher Education Financial Services

6/29/06

9:30am

College Bound Program Workshop
Cesar Chavez PCS

GEAR UP

6/26/06

DC GEAR UP Summer Institute
Howard University, University of the District of
Columbia, and Southeastern University

7/10/06

DC GEAR UP Summer Institute
Georgetown University Summer Institute begins.

Nutrition Services

06/04/06 – 06/10/06

June Commission on Food and Nutrition Meeting
One Judiciary Square

06/05/06 – 06/06/06

Summer Food Services Program Week

06/15/06

National Obesity Action Forum
Bethesda, MD

06/15/06

CACFP Collaborative Meeting
State Education Office

06/19/06

Free Summer Meals Program Kick Off

Policy, Research, & Analysis

06/08/06

8:30 am – 10:30 am

Policy Breakfast Forum on Public Education Finance
Funding for Adequacy in the District of Columbia

06/14/06

5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

State Advisory Panel on Special Education Meeting

Education Experience

*By Jasmine Martín
10th Grader at Friendship Collegiate Academy*

Few high school students get to visit the colleges of their choice. I was fortunate enough to be chosen at the last minute to be one of those students. I was selected to take part in the first DC GEAR UP Spring Break College Tour! As the bus heads home, I can now say that this trip was worth all the homesickness I endured! I had a great time traveling with this group, and I hope these counselors and students get to enjoy other experiences together!

One experience that inspired me was the trip to Dr. Martin Luther King's birth home and Ebenezer Baptist Church. We were taken on a tour of Dr. King's home and where he lived until the age of 12. The most moving tour was in the Church. It almost felt like you were put back in time, with his father preaching a sermon, and his mother would be playing the organ. It almost felt like I was fighting with them in spirit, just as I am today. That stop has taught me to stay strong and true to being a "freedom fighter".

Another experience that was interesting was the visit to the Coca-Cola Headquarters. We had the wonderful opportunity to have a conference and lunch with Mona Kelly, Director of Human Resources for the Supply Chain Division. "You are competing in a very diverse generation for success," she said during her speech. This is very true because so many races are competing for the best jobs and are bringing nothing but the best skills. This means that as African Americans we must be prepared for any and everything.

The final experience that I liked was the college tours. We visited Emory University, Clark Atlanta, Spelman, and Morehouse. The most lasting impression, for me, was at Emory University. "Shoot for the moon, and even if you miss, you will land among the stars," said Mr. Pace, Dean of Students. His words stuck with me and will continue to because they are real. It means that as long as your goals are high, if you don't achieve them exactly, you will be close. Overall due to the GEAR UP program providing this trip, I had a great time! There were not only valuable facts, but also friendly new and old people. The college sessions were great, as were the recreational activities. There was nothing bad about this trip, and I hope we get to take more! I want to thank our wonderful GEAR UP Coordinators for giving us this opportunity and hopefully there will be more to come!